

January 8, 2020

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CWD STATUS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a neurologic disease that is always fatal and affects deer, elk, moose, and caribou. Known to be present in neighboring areas of Canada and Wyoming, the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) first detected CWD in Montana in 2017 during focused surveillance south of Billings.¹

FWP expanded its surveillance in 2018 and found 21 cases in deer in counties along Montana's northern border (from Liberty County east to North Dakota, roughly three-quarters of the border's length) and another five cases south of Billings.²

In 2019, after CWD unexpectedly turned up in urban deer in Libby, FWP ratcheted up surveillance there and other areas where the disease was known to exist. The department also offered free testing to hunters statewide. Out of 6,927 samples taken after April 1, results were positive for 136 animals (mostly deer, plus one elk and one moose) and identified new affected areas, including the Ruby Valley in southwest Montana; parts of Yellowstone and Treasure Counties east and northeast of Billings; Rosebud, Big Horn, and Powder River Counties south and east of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation; McCone County east of Fort Peck Reservoir; and Prairie County just to the south.³ A detailed map from FWP is provided on the next page.

The legislature's Environmental Quality Council (EQC) is studying CWD this interim and visited the Libby CWD Management Zone in September 2019, where FWP demonstrated deer trapping and sampling techniques and equipment.



Neil Anderson, FWP, demonstrates for EQC members how a clover trap works.
 Photo credit: Hope Stockwell

¹ <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/diseasesAndResearch/diseases/chronicWastingDisease/default.html>, January 7, 2020.

² Ibid.

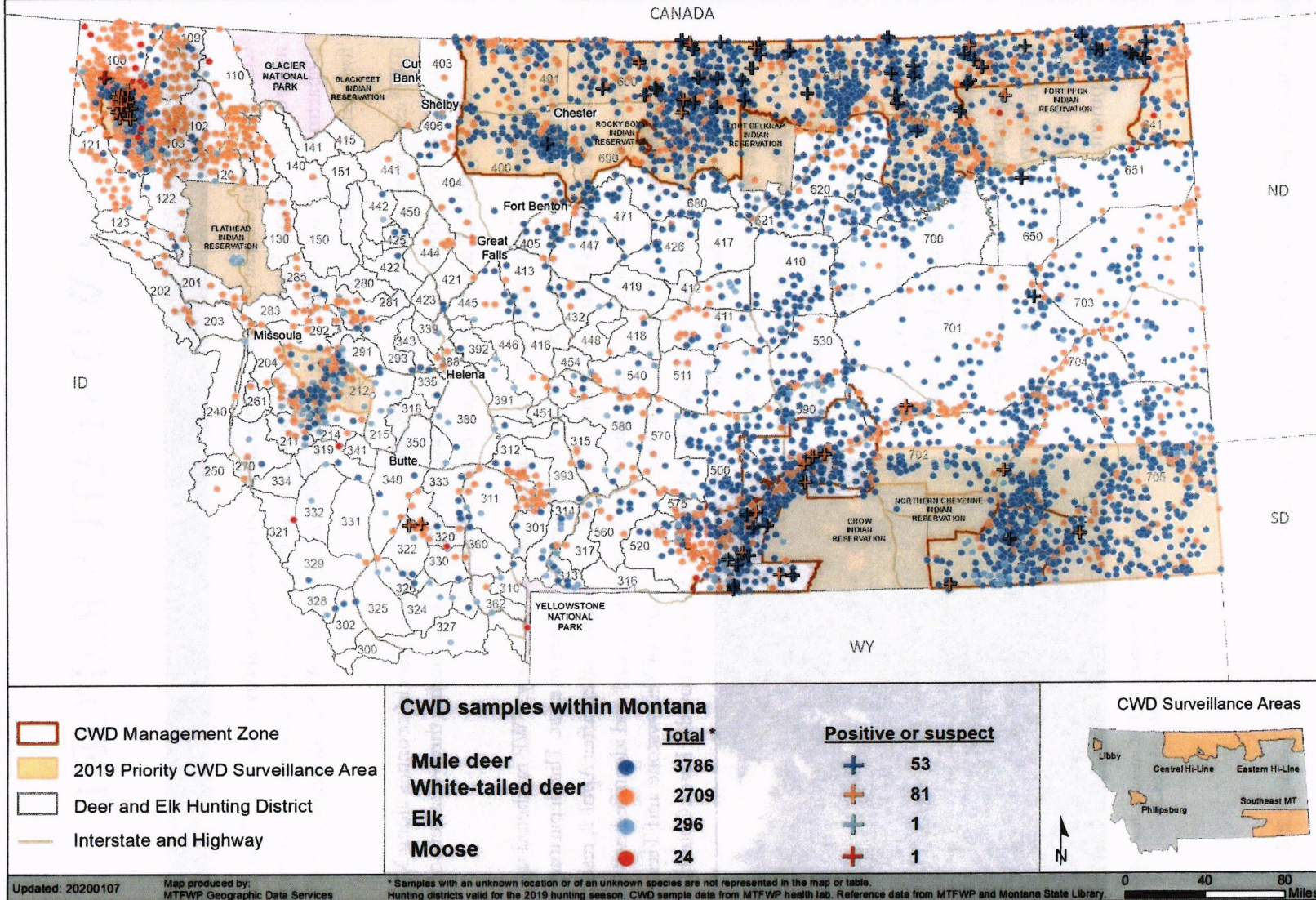
³ Email, Dr. Emily Almberg, FWP, January 8, 2020.

2019 Montana Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance

MONTANA FWP

State-wide CWD Sampling

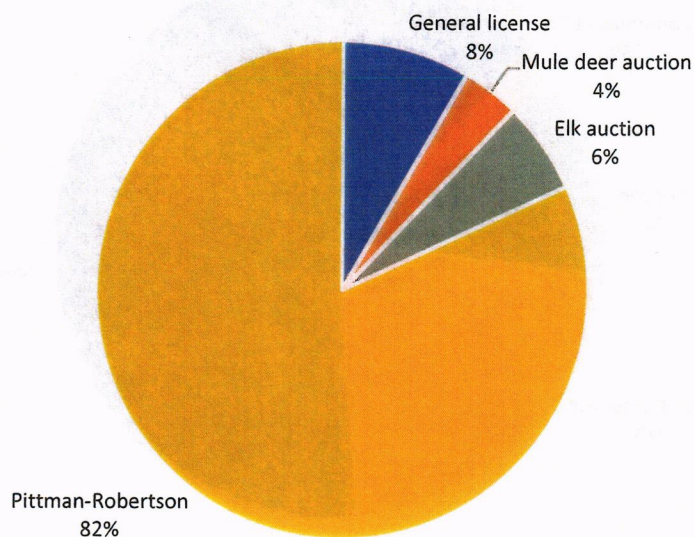
Samples collected from: 04/01/2019 - 01/07/2020



EXPENDITURES

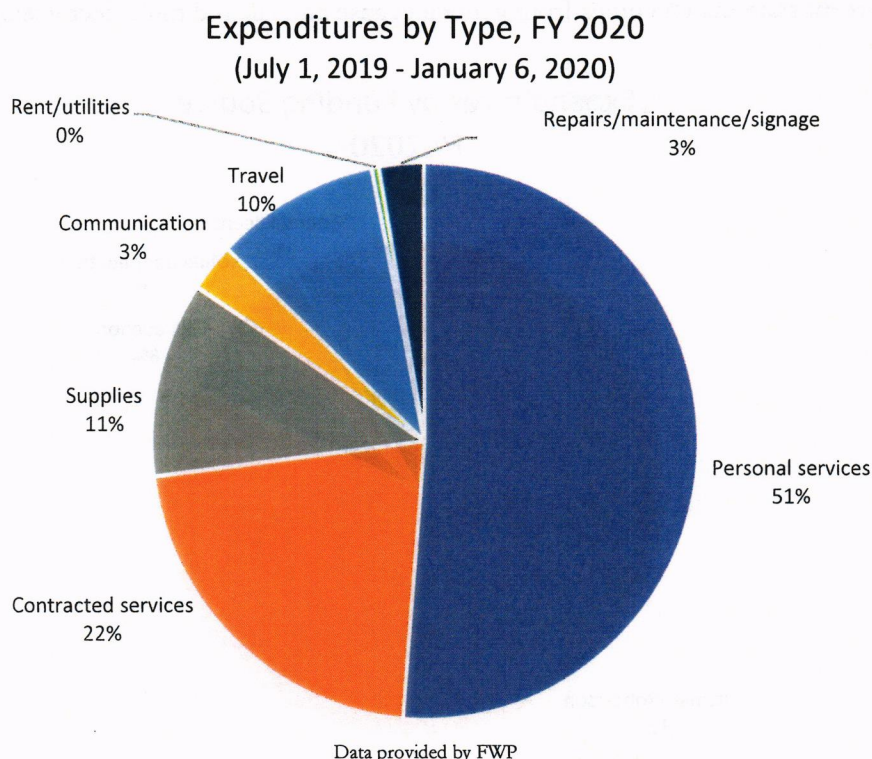
Through House Bill 2, the 2019 Legislature appropriated nearly \$400,000 each year of the 2020-2021 biennium to FWP for disease surveillance. Seventy-five percent of the funding comes from federal Pittman-Robertson money. The required 25 percent state match comes from general license and elk and mule deer license auction revenue.

Expenditures by Funding Source
FY 2020



Data provided by FWP

Between July 1, 2019 and January 6, 2020, FWP spent \$310,342, largely for personal services, including some temporary staff and 27 seasonal short-term employees who helped gather and organize samples to be sent to the Colorado State University (CSU) lab for testing.



TESTING

CSU's testing fees account for most of the contracted services noted in the above chart (\$59,810). FWP anticipates another \$70,000 in testing costs in FY 2020.

The preliminary CWD test costs \$17 under FWP's contract with CSU. If the test comes back positive, CSU performs a \$35 confirmatory test.

LEPO staff analysis of testing data for the 2018 general season found the total average time it took for FWP to process a testing sample and get results back from CSU was 13.2 calendar days. In 2019, according to FWP, the average time elapsed between sample collection from a hunter-harvested deer and the posting of test results on the agency's website was 18.6 calendar days.⁴

⁴ Email, Dr. Emily Almberg, FWP, January 8, 2020.